HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

25/00592/PMBPA

OFFICER REPORT

Case No: **25/00592/PMBPA** **Prior Approval Agricultural to Dwellings**

Proposal: **Conversion of existing redundant steel framed building into a residential dwelling.**

Location: **Land East Of Orchard Cottage Bucks Drove Ramsey St Marys**

Applicant: **Mr D Stagno**

Grid Ref: **525568 289236**

DESCRIPTION OF SITE AND APPLICATION

The application relates to an agricultural building (previously used for storing grain) and lies on land to the east of Orchard Cottage along Bucks Drove to the north of the village of Ramsey St Mary's.

The site is not within a Conservation Area and there are no Listed Buildings or protected trees in the immediate vicinity. It does however lie within Flood Zone 3 as per the most recent Environment Agency Flood Risk Maps and Data. It has a medium risk of fluvial flooding, very low risk of surface water flooding and is not considered likely to be impacted by groundwater or reservoir flooding.

This application seeks prior approval for change of use of the existing redundant steel framed agricultural building into a residential dwelling under Class Q of Part 3 of the GPDO 2015 (as amended).

It should be noted that the application is accompanied by a cover letter in which the application is exercising their right to utilise superseded permitted development rights for agricultural conversions as they stood prior to the 21st of May 2024 amendments to Class Q of the GPDO. This is valid for submissions made to the Local Planning Authority made prior to the 21st of May 2025. This is to allow for the conversion of buildings to 'larger' dwellinghouses (defined as floorspace exceeding 100m² but less than 465m² as per Part Q.3).

NATIONAL GUIDANCE

Class Q of The Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended) (GPDO) (pre-21st of May 2024)

The National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

Planning Practice Guidance

For full details visit the government website: https://www.gov.uk

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

0402179OUT - Erection of agricultural dwelling (Permission)

0502967REM - Approval of siting, design, external appearance, means of access and landscaping for the erection of an agricultural dwelling (Details Approved)

CONSULTATIONS

HDC Environmental Health - No objections.

Cambridgeshire County Council Highways Team - No objections (further details in the proceeding sections of this report).

Environment Agency - No objections.

Internal Group of Drainage Boards - No comments.

Please note, there is no requirement for the LPA to consult the Local Town or Parish Council on applications submitted under Class Q.

REPRESENTATIONS

None received at the time of determination.

SUMMARY OF ISSUES

Q. Development consisting of—

(a) a change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use as an agricultural building to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order; and or

(b) development referred to in paragraph (a) together with building operations reasonably necessary to convert the building referred to in paragraph (a) to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of that Schedule.

Aside from the determination as to the agricultural use of the site (below) Q.1(a) is not relevant and the assessment begins at Q.1(b) relating to larger dwellinghouses (exceeding 100m² but less than 465m²)

*Q.1 Development is not permitted by Class Q if—

(a) the site was not used solely for an agricultural use as part of an established agricultural unit—
(i) on 20th March 2013, or
(ii) in the case of a building which was in use before that date but was not in use on that date, when it was last in use, or (iii) in the case of a site which was brought into use after 20th March 2013, for a period of at least 10 years before the date development under Class Q begins;

Officer comments - Complies. The supplementary cover letter and statement confirms that the use of the site was agricultural on the above date as part of an established agricultural unit and up until the present day. A site visit also confirms the agricultural character of the site.

Q.1 (b) in the case of— a larger dwellinghouse, within an established agricultural unit—

(aa) the cumulative number of separate larger dwellinghouses developed under Class Q exceeds 3; or

(bb) the cumulative floor space of the existing building or buildings changing use to a larger dwellinghouse or dwellinghouses under Class Q exceeds 465 square metres;

Officer comments - Complies, the cover letter confirms that no other development has taken place under Class Q on the application site. This corresponds with the planning history of the site. It is also confirmed that the application only proposes one larger dwellinghouse, with the cumulative floor space of the existing building to be converted is 307.01m².

(ba) the floor space of any dwellinghouse developed under Class Q having a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order exceeds 465 square metres;

Officer comments - Complies, submitted plans reflect that the proposed dwelling will not exceed this level of floorspace

(c) in the case of—

(i) a smaller dwellinghouse, within an established agricultural unit—
(aa) the cumulative number of separate smaller dwellinghouses developed under Class Q exceeds 5; or
(bb) the floor space of any one separate smaller dwellinghouse having a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order exceeds 100 square metres;

Officer comments - Not applicable, this relates to a larger dwellinghouse.

(d) the development under Class Q (together with any previous development under Class Q) within an established agricultural unit would result in either or both of the following—

(i) a larger dwellinghouse or larger dwellinghouses having more than 465 square metres of floor space having a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order;
(ii) the cumulative number of separate dwellinghouses having a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order exceeding 5;

Officer comments - Complies, this will be the only dwellinghouse provided under Class Q and does not exceed 465m²

(e) the site is occupied under an agricultural tenancy, unless the express consent of both the landlord and the tenant has been obtained;
(f) less than 1 year before the date development begins—
(i) an agricultural tenancy over the site has been terminated, and
(ii) the termination was for the purpose of carrying out development under Class Q, unless both the landlord and the tenant have agreed in writing that the site is no longer required for agricultural use;

Officer comment: Compliant - The submitted cover letter confirms that the site is not subject to an agricultural tenancy, nor has it been included within an agricultural tenancy within the last year.

(g) development under Class A(a) or Class B(a) of Part 6 of this Schedule (agricultural buildings and operations) has been carried out on the established agricultural unit—
(i) since 20th March 2013; or
(ii) where development under Class Q begins after 20th March 2023, during the period which is 10 years before the date development under Class Q begins;

Officer comments - Complies, confirmed in supplementary cover statement and reflected in planning history.

(h) the development would result in the external dimensions of the building extending beyond the external dimensions of the existing building at any given point;

Officer comments - Complies, no extensions are proposed as part of this development.

(i) the development under Class Q(b) would consist of building operations other than—
(i) the installation or replacement of—
(aa) windows, doors, roofs, or exterior walls, or
(bb) water, drainage, electricity, gas or other services, to the extent reasonably necessary for the building to function as a dwellinghouse; and
(ii) partial demolition to the extent reasonably necessary to carry out building operations allowed by paragraph Q.1(i)(i);

Officer comments - Complies, the submitted plans do not indicate that any additional works (other than those above) are proposed. A structural survey has been submitted as part of the application, and alongside a site visit completed by officers, it is determined that the proposed building is in good repair and of a substantial construction with a concrete base. Therefore, the LPA has no reason to consider that additional extensive works would be required.

(j) the site is on article 2(3) land;

Officer comments - Complies, the site is outside of the Conservation Area.

(k) the site is, or forms part of—
(i) a site of special scientific interest;
(ii) a safety hazard area;
(iii) a military explosives storage area;

Officer comments - Complies, confirmed within the cover statement and no such restrictions identified within Local Authority Mapping.

(l) the site is, or contains, a scheduled monument; or (m) the building is a listed building.

Officer comments - Complies, no such constraints present.

*Conditions - Q.2

(1) Where the development proposed is development under Class Q(a) together with development under Class Q(b), development is permitted subject to the condition that before beginning the development, the developer must apply to the Local Planning Authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required as to—

(a) transport and highways impacts of the development

Officer comments: The site benefits from existing access from Bucks Drove, which joins the B1040 on Herne Road. Cambridgeshire County Council's Highways Team have been consulted and raise no objections to the scheme.

It should be acknowledged that Policy LP17 of the Local Plan requires one secure cycle storage space per bedroom for all Class C3 development unless it can be demonstrated that this is not possible. In cases relating to prior approval, it is not considered necessary to use the full force of the policy in the assessment or condition details such as the scale or appearance of the storage as the constraints of the site sometimes make this unviable. In this case it is considered that there is some scope within the site to accommodate cycle storage relative to the scale of development.

(b) noise impacts of the development

Officer comment: HDC's Environmental Health Team have been consulted, and following a review of submitted documents raise no objections in terms of noise risk. Whilst the surroundings are of a

rural nature, residential use is characteristic of the area and given the expected activities associated with this, it is not considered that there would be an unacceptable impact on the occupiers of the dwelling in relation to noise nor would its provision result in unacceptable noise impacts on the surroundings.

(c) contamination risks on the site

Officer comment: HDC's Environmental Health Team have been consulted and raise no issues regarding this.

(d) flooding risks on the site

Officer comment: National guidance and Policy LP5 of the Local Plan to 2036 seek to steer new developments to areas at lowest risk of flooding and advises this should be done through application of the Sequential Test, and if appropriate the Exceptions Test (as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2024).

In this case, the Council produced an updated Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) in 2024, which defines Ramsey St Mary's as being within Flood Zone 3 and the Environment Agency (EA) flood zone mapping also shows Ramsey St Mary's, including the site, as being located within Flood Zone 3.

Flood Zone 3 is defined as having the highest risk of flooding in the Government's National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). The National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF) seeks to direct inappropriate development away from areas at the highest risk of flooding (whether existing or future). Where development is proposed in areas that are at the highest risk of flooding, the Framework requires a sequential, risk-based approach to the location of development, so as to avoid where possible, flood risk to people and property.

However, existing raised defences, which the 2024 SFRA specifically does not take account of, provide some protection to existing properties in this area. Given this, Huntingdonshire District Council's Development Management Planning Committee have previously agreed the following: Some villages, including some of the Ramsey villages, are entirely within Zone 3 in the 2024 SFRA. New development within settlements, can in some cases help enhance or maintain the vitality of a rural community and this is a key objective of the Council's Planning Strategies and the NPPF. Therefore, for those villages which are entirely within Flood Zone 3 as defined in the 2024 SFRA only, the 2010 SFRA which took account of flood defences will be used as the basis for decision making, and general market housing will only be permitted in areas shown as being in Flood Zone 1 as defined in that document. This approach follows discussions with the Environment Agency and the Middle Level Commissioners and will ensure that regard is still given to flood risk but will also allow some development to be approved in these villages to maintain their vitality.

The Huntingdonshire Strategic Flood Risk Assessment 2010 shows the site to be within Flood Zone 1 and the site is at low risk of surface water flooding and groundwater flooding as per the EA data. Accordingly, as the site is considered to be in Flood Zone 1 and as such, does not require consultation with the Environment Agency nor the provision of the Sequential or Exception Tests set out within the NPPF (2024).

It is not considered that, given the above and the permeability of the surroundings, there would be a detrimental impact on flood risk or surface water run-off in the vicinity. Nevertheless, a Flood Risk Assessment has accompanies the submitted application which presents mitigation measures, which are considered acceptable in this regard and shall be secured by condition.

(e) whether the location or siting of the building makes it otherwise impractical or undesirable for the building to change from agricultural use to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses) of the Schedule to the Use Classes Order, and

(f) the design or external appearance of the building

Officer comment: In terms of suitability of the siting, as detailed above, there is an established character of residential and agricultural uses co-existing comfortably in the locality. Environmental Health Officers have not raised any concerns in terms of noise, odour, light etc. As such, the LPA has no reason to consider that the site is unsuitable for such development.

In terms of its appearance, there is no increase in scale and, overall, the unit retains a 'barn style' appearance and the materials used (as detailed on the submitted plans) ensures that the development is assimilated well into the locality.

(g) the provision of adequate natural light in all habitable rooms of the dwellinghouses

Officer comment: All the habitable rooms would benefit from at least one window or opening, and it is considered that adequate natural light would be provided into the habitable spaces of the proposed dwelling.

*Other Matters:

The application is accompanied by a Protected Species Survey & Precautionary Working Method Statement prepared by Sound Ecology, dated January 2025, and received by the LPA on the 27th of March 2025. The survey carried out a number of assessments which focused on protected and biodiversity species, including bats, badgers and great crested newts. From this, it was determined that no habitats of protected species were identified. The survey concluded that the application site is of negligible suitability of protected species, with the site considered low in ecological value. It was also determined that any potential risks from the proposed development on any protected or notable species are limited, with no further surveys or evaluation necessary. The survey does go on to make recommendations regarding minimising harm to any species, and these shall be secured by condition as per Schedule 2, Part 3, Section W (13) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended).

*Conclusion:

It is considered that the proposal complies with Class Q of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 (as amended). Prior approval is required and approved, subject to conditions.

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